

Introduction to Japanese Literature and Culture, 3 Credits

CRN: 90683 Course Number: JAPN 8803 Section: B

Semester and Academic Year: Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor	Email	Drop-in Hours & Location
Amanda Weiss	amanda.weiss@modlangs.gatech.edu	Thursdays 11 am-1 pm Swann 314

General Course Information

Course Description

This course explores Japanese literature and culture through the reading and discussion of short authentic texts. Students will engage with literary forms such as short stories, essays, poems, and novel excerpts to build reading comprehension and interpretive skills. Readings feature canonical authors including Natsume Sōseki, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, and Kawabata Yasunari, alongside contemporary writers like Murakami Haruki and Banana Yoshimoto. Through these works, students examine themes such as national identity, modernity, and societal change. The course also explores key cultural concepts and historical contexts, encouraging students to connect literary analysis with a broader understanding of Japanese culture and society. This course is taught in Japanese.

Pre- &/or Co-Requisites

None

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Develop the ability to read and comprehend authentic Japanese literary texts, including short stories, essays, poems, and excerpts from novels, with increasing fluency and accuracy;
- Analyze and interpret literary works by authors such as Natsume Sōseki and Murakami Haruki, identifying key themes, narrative techniques, and stylistic features;
- Communicate informed interpretations of literary texts in spoken and written Japanese, using appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and discourse strategies;
- Explain major cultural concepts and historical contexts that shape Japanese literature, including ideas related to identity, modernity, and tradition;
- Critically reflect on the relationship between literature and Japanese society, demonstrating an understanding of how cultural values and social changes are expressed through literary works.

Assignments and Weighting

Assignment	Date	Weight (Percentage, points, etc.)
Participation and Attendance	Throughout	15%
Homework	Throughout	25%
Mini-Presentations	Throughout	20%
Unit Tests	Throughout	15%
Final Presentation	Final Week	15%
Warm-Ups	Throughout	10%

Extra Credit Opportunities

If 90% of students complete the CIOS evaluations, all students will receive +1% extra credit on their final grade. This must be anonymous (do not notify instructor that you have completed this; the completion rate is anonymous and visible to the instructor).

Additional criteria for successful completion of the course

Students must complete at least 70% of the assignments within each module. They must also attend at least 70% of classroom sessions to successfully complete the course.

Grading Scale

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Description of Graded Components

Participation and Attendance (15%)

Regular attendance and active participation are key to success in this course and will help you build both your language skills and confidence. Students are encouraged to come prepared, engage thoughtfully in discussions and activities, and contribute to a focused, respectful learning environment. Limiting distractions (such as phones, laptops, or unrelated materials) will ensure you get the most out of each class and earn full participation credit. In keeping with institute policies, reasonable accommodations will be made for approved absences. Students are encouraged to communicate proactively with the instructor if they expect to miss class.

Homework (25%)

There are three homework assignments associated with each reading: Comprehension, Grammar, and Reflection. These assignments are designed to reinforce your understanding of the text, strengthen key grammatical structures, and encourage deeper engagement with the material. Regular completion of homework will help you prepare for class discussions and build both linguistic proficiency and interpretive skills.

Mini-Presentations (20%)

There are four mini-presentations (one for each course module). These are low-stakes presentations which will be held either in small groups or in rotating groups as a “poster session” format. For this assignment, students will present on a selected topic for 5-8 minutes, followed by a brief two-minute Q&A session. Each presentation is tied to the unit theme and offers an opportunity to engage creatively with course concepts, develop speaking skills, and share your perspectives on course themes with your peers.

Unit Tests (x4) (15%)

Each Unit Test is on Canvas and is based on homework assignments (Comprehension and Grammar) and in-class lectures. There is one test per module (four total). Tests will take place during class time.

Final Presentation (15%):

For the Final Presentation, students will select one of the readings from the semester and develop an 8-10-minute presentation that explores the text, its author, or its historical and cultural context in greater depth. Presentations should be more than a summary of the work—they should offer a clear interpretation or argument and be supported by specific examples from the text and brief references to the work’s cultural or historical background. Students are encouraged to engage creatively with the material, incorporating visuals, close readings, or comparative perspectives to enhance their analysis. For additional guidelines and evaluation criteria, please see Canvas.

Graduate Student-Led Warm-Ups (10%)

Graduate students will design and lead two 10-15-minute warm-up activities over the course of the semester. These sessions may review key grammar points or introduce and explore aspects of the day’s reading, with an emphasis on clarity, engagement, and creativity. Students are encouraged to develop interactive and thoughtful activities that support their peers’ learning. Performance will be evaluated based on effectiveness and engagement, with feedback from both undergraduate students and the instructor.

Course Materials

Required Course Materials

All course materials, communications, links, files, etc. will be provided on Canvas, including the syllabus, readings, and homework assignments. You may also be asked to rent a few of the anime that we will watch in class. These will be popular works that are widely available online.

Course Policies, Expectations, & Guidelines

Attendance Policy

Regular attendance is essential for success in this course, as it supports the development of both language skills and active engagement with course materials. Students are expected to come prepared and participate thoughtfully in all class activities while helping maintain a focused and respectful learning environment. Minimizing distractions will help ensure full participation credit. In accordance with institute policies, reasonable accommodations will be made for approved absences, and students should communicate with the instructor in advance whenever possible. Students must attend 70% of classroom sessions to successfully complete the course.

Academic Honesty/Academic Integrity Statement

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. [Review Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the [student Code of Conduct](#). Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations. **Use of AI is not allowed in this course.**

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

Modules will automatically close at the end of the one-week submission period. Late assignments are allowed only in the case of illness, emergencies, and other institute-approved absences. Please communicate with me if you miss an assignment.

Collaboration & Group Work

Students should complete all homework assignments and projects by themselves unless otherwise notified by the instructor.

Acceptable Student Conduct/ Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Student Well-Being

At Georgia Tech, we are concerned about your overall physical, social, and mental well-being. A comprehensive list of wellness related resources has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-being ([student-resource-guide \(gatech.edu\)](#))

Course Schedule

The Course Schedule is available on the course Canvas site. It also includes links to all assignments and readings.